



**POLICY TITLE: Water and Wastewater Consecutive Estimated Accounts Policy**

POLICY NO: PP-0009

LAST REVISION DATE: March 29, 2017

EFFECTIVE DATE: August 17, 2018

MANAGER REVIEWED: Tom Hewitson

TO BE REVIEWED: 8/1/2023

MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY: Senior Policy Advisor, Financial Planning, Administration and Policy Division

## I GENERAL

The Water and Wastewater Consecutive Estimated Accounts Policy details the protocol followed by the City of Hamilton ("City") and its water / wastewater billing agent, Alectra Utilities Corporation ("Alectra"), in rendering estimated accounts where actual water consumption cannot be confirmed due to City's inability to obtain access to a water meter or water metering equipment for the purpose of meter reading, installation, inspection, maintenance or repair of utility property.

## II BACKGROUND

Pursuant to the Waterworks By-law R84-026 of the City of Hamilton (the "Waterworks By-law"), billing for the supply of water in the City of Hamilton is, in part, based on the consumption registered on the water metering equipment. Where no water meter has been installed, billing is based on a non-metered or flat-rate basis. The Waterworks By-law requires customers to provide access to the City to the water meter and related equipment for the purpose of meter reading, installation, inspection, maintenance or repair. Where access to the water meter and related equipment is not provided and actual water consumption cannot be obtained by the City, water consumption is billed based on estimated amounts. This Policy applies to circumstances where consecutive estimated accounts are issued due to the inability of the City or its agents to obtain access to the water meter and related equipment.

## III POLICY

### DEFINITIONS

**Service Valve:** Also commonly referred to as street valve or curb stop, service valves control the water running to a premise from the City's water main. Service valves are usually located outside the residence typically at or near the property line, either in the front, back or side of the property (for example: lawn, driveway or private sidewalk). Service valves are owned and operated by the City. However, any water lines which go from the service valve to the premises are owned, operated and maintained by the property owner.

**Vacant:** For the purpose of this Policy, vacant means a premise that, regardless of the presence of furnishings, is not occupied by any person for more than 90 consecutive days.

## CONSECUTIVE ESTIMATED ACCOUNTS

Where access to the water meter and related equipment is not provided for the purpose of meter reading, installation, inspection or repair of utility property and actual water consumption cannot be obtained by the City, water consumption will be billed based on consecutive estimated water account protocol set out in the attached Tables.

## SERVICE DISCONNECTION

If the consecutive estimated account protocol and resulting ongoing estimated accounts, do not result in the City achieving access to the water meter and related equipment, the City may disconnect (shut-off) water service to residential premises (except for multi-residential) provided any of the following conditions exist:

1. Access, satisfactory to the General Manager of Public Works, or its designate, is not provided to the premises or the water metering equipment for the purpose of meter reading, installation, inspection, maintenance or repair for at least 12 consecutive calendar months;
2. Following notice from the City or its agents, an obstruction that prevents meter reading, installation, inspection, maintenance or repair was not removed by the customer to the satisfaction of the General Manager of Public Works, or its designate, for at least 12 consecutive calendar months;
3. Premise is determined to be vacant and at least three consecutive estimated invoices were issued; or
4. At least two increased consecutive estimated invoices (either 2m<sup>3</sup>/day or 3m<sup>3</sup>/day) remain unpaid resulting in arrears transfer to the property tax roll.

Disconnections of water service will **not** occur:

- on a Friday, a weekend, a legal holiday, the day before a holiday, or on any day City administration offices are not open for business;
- between November 1 to April 30, except for vacant properties;
- for multi-residential, industrial, commercial and institutional accounts;
- for sub-meters commonly referred to as satellite meters.

Following service disconnection, the water service will not be turned back on until access, satisfactory to the General Manager of Public Works, or its designate, is provided to the water meter and related equipment. Where conditions are found that do not allow for the utility work to be performed, the City, at its sole discretion, may turn on the water service where the customer makes arrangements within a specified timeframe to permit the work to be completed. The customer must adhere to these arrangements, failing which the water service may again be disconnected, which will result in additional applicable fees.

## NOTIFICATION

Notice of planned service disconnection will be provided to the owner or occupant of the affected premises by personal service or prepaid mail or by posting the notice on the premises in a conspicuous place. Depending on staff availability, the service disconnection may occur within ten (10) business days following the initial disconnection date provided on the notice.

### Consecutive Estimated Water Account Protocol 1 – Single Residential

Consecutive Estimated Monthly Billing	Communication / Activities		Bill Estimate Calculation
	Alectra	Hamilton Water	
1	- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer	- None required	- Consumption estimate based on the prior 12-month historical average usage for the account  - If no history or < 2 billing periods, use 1m <sup>3</sup> /day
2	- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer  - Generate work order to HW to address estimates	- Receive work order from Alectra and commence process to attend site for required meter equipment repair or touchpad relocation	- Consumption estimate based on the prior 12-month historical average usage for the account  - If no history or < 2 billing periods, use 1m <sup>3</sup> /day
3	- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer	- None required	- Consumption estimate based on the prior 12-month historical average usage for the account  - If no history or < 2 billing periods, use 1m <sup>3</sup> /day

Consecutive Estimated Water Account Protocol 1 – Single Residential  
 (Continued)

Consecutive Estimated Monthly Billing	Communication/Activities		Bill Estimate Calculation
	Alectra	Hamilton Water	
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer</li> <li>- Letter issued to account holder (to property owner if different from account holder) informing of access issue resulting in City exercising right to move to double flat billing. Where current estimates &gt; 2m<sup>3</sup>/day, use 2 times historical usage. Notification provided that if issue not rectified within 30 days the City may exercise authority to triple flat rate billing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consumption estimate based on double flat rate billing (2m<sup>3</sup>/day)</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consumption estimate based on double flat rate billing (2m<sup>3</sup>/day)</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Letter issued to property owner informing of access issue and notification that City will exercise authority to triple flat rate billing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consumption estimate based on triple flat rate billing (3m<sup>3</sup>/day)</li> </ul>
7 to 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consumption estimate based on triple flat rate billing (3m<sup>3</sup>/day) until such time as the meter issues have resolved to the City's satisfaction with metered billings restored with actual readings enabled</li> </ul>
12 and thereafter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shut-off in certain circumstances</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consumption estimate based on triple flat rate billing (3m<sup>3</sup>/day) until such time as the meter issues have resolved to the City's satisfaction with metered billings restored with actual readings enabled and/or shut-off</li> </ul>

Consecutive Estimated Water Account Protocol 2 – Multi-Residential and  
 Industrial / Commercial / Institutional

Consecutive Estimated Monthly Billing	Communication/Activities		Bill Estimate Calculation
	Alectra	Hamilton Water	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consumption estimate based on the prior 12 average usage for the account</li> <li>- If no history or &lt; 2 billing periods, use average consumption of similar customers</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer</li> <li>- Generate work order to HW to address estimates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Receive work order from Alectra and commence process to attend site for required meter equipment repair or touchpad relocation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consumption estimate based on the prior 12-month historical average usage for the account</li> <li>- If no history or &lt; 2 billing periods, use average consumption of similar customers</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None required</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Consumption estimate based on the prior 12-month historical average usage for the account</li> <li>- If no history or &lt; 2 billing periods, use average consumption of similar customers</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer</li> <li>- Letter issued to account holder (to property owner if different from account holder) informing of access issue resulting in City exercising right to move to double historical consumption billing. Notification that if issue not resolved within 30 days, the City may exercise authority to triple actual historical billings (if no historical available bill or if it is suspected that the historical usage is not accurate, use 2x actual consumption of similar customers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- None required</li> </ul>	

Consecutive Estimated Water Account Protocol 2 – Multi-Residential and  
 Industrial / Commercial / Institutional  
 (Continued)

Consecutive Estimated Monthly Billing	Communication/Activities		Bill Estimate Calculation
	Alectra	Hamilton Water	
5	- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer	- None required	- Consumption based on double actual historical billings (if no historical available or if it is suspected that the historical usage is not accurate, bill 2x actual consumption of similar customers)
6	- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer	- Letter issued to property owner informing of access issue and notification provided that City will exercise authority to triple actual historical billings (if no historical available bill or if it is suspected that the historical usage is not accurate, use 3x actual consumption of similar customers)	- Consumption based on double actual historical billings (if no historical available or if it is suspected that the historical usage is not accurate, bill 2x actual consumption of similar customers)
7 to 11	- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer	- None required	- Consumption based on triple actual historical billings (if no historical available or if it is suspected that the historical usage is not accurate, bill 3x actual consumption of similar customers)
12 and thereafter	- Meter reader leaves meter read request door hanger for customer	- None required	- Consumption estimate based on triple flat rate billing (3m <sup>3</sup> /day) until such time as the meter issues have resolved to the City's satisfaction with metered billings restored with actual readings enabled and/or shut-off